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ABSTRACT

This lesson plan uses students' interest in sports to teach good citizenship. With its focus on rules, responsibility, conflict resolution, and teamwork, the unit emphasizes the development of critical thinking, decision-making, and citizenship skills in young people. This lesson plan is part of a series of fully prepared, interactive classroom lesson plans offered by the Sports and the Law program of the Constitutional Rights Foundation. Each lesson includes detailed teacher instructions, background information, and student handouts. This lesson helps students identify and resolve conflict on the sports field and in their daily lives. Students: (1) identify conflict in their lives; (2) evaluate sports scenarios to identify flash points where conflict escalates into arguments or violence; and (3) apply methods for conflict resolution to a hypothetical situation from everyday life. (BT)

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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN SPORTS AND ON THE STREET

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CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN SPORTS AND ON THE STREET

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Introduction

Constitutional Rights Foundation's *Sports and the Law* program uses students' interest in sports to teach good citizenship. By learning how rules—on and off the playing field—relate to society, students acquire knowledge necessary to become responsible citizens and effective participants in our democracy. CRF believes that good sportsmanship is good citizenship. With a focus on rules, responsibility, conflict resolution, and teamwork, *Sports and the Law* emphasizes the development of critical thinking, decision-making, and citizenship skills in young people.

This mini-unit is part a series of fully prepared, interactive classroom lesson plans offered by the Sports and the Law program. Each mini-unit illustrates important aspects of law and society and promotes an understanding of law-related concepts by linking the excitement of sports to broader social issues.

Overview

This lesson enables students to identify and resolve conflict on the sports field and in their everyday lives.

First, students identify conflict in their own lives. Next, they evaluate sports scenarios to identify flash points, where conflict escalates into arguments or violence. Finally, students apply methods for conflict resolution to a hypothetical situation from everyday life.

Objectives

Students will:

- Define conflict in terms of their own lives.
- Identify and describe elements of conflict that can lead to violence.
- Apply methods of conflict resolution to a hypothetical scenario.

Materials & Preparation

- **Handout A—Sports Stories**—1 per group
- **Handout B—Tips for Managing Conflict**—1 per student
- **Handout C—Conflict in Everyday Life**—1 per student

Procedure

A. Guided Discussion—Conflict in Everyday Life

1. Tell students that today, they are going to find out:
   - How conflict can lead to violence.
   - How to recognize triggers or "flash points" that can make conflict get worse.
   - How to avoid doing or saying things that can become flash points.

2. Ask students: What does the word *conflict* mean? (Conflict is a disagreement between two or more persons.)

3. Explain that conflict is a normal part of life. If possible, give an example of conflict from your own experience.

4. Ask students to describe conflicts from their own lives. After each description, ask:

   - Did your conflict become serious? Did it lead to arguing, fighting, or even violence?
   - What "set you off"? What did people do or say to make you angry?

5. Tell students that a *flash point* is something that people do or say that can make a conflict get worse.

6. Explain that in sports, conflicts often arise out of the excitement of competition—people want to win! To keep games fair and running smoothly, athletes work with umpires and referees to avoid flash points that can stop the game or even cause violence.

B. Small Group Activity—Conflict on the Playing Field

1. Tell students that they are going to look at six different sports stories to find out how flash points grow out of conflicts on the playing field.

2. Divide the class into small groups of three to five students. You will need six groups. Distribute one of the six stories from **Handout A—Sports Stories** to each group. (You may duplicate groups if necessary.)

   Have groups read their Sports Story and answer the questions at the bottom of the handout. Each group should choose a reporter who can describe the sports story in their own words and explain their answers to the questions on Handout A. Students can choose more than one reporter if they like.

   Allow groups time to answer the questions and prepare their reports.

3. After all groups have completed the questions on Handout A, have the reporter from each group briefly describe their sports scenario and report the group's findings to the rest of the class.

C. Classroom Activity—Conflict in Everyday Life

1. Explain that on the playing field, athletes and referees can usually deal quickly and fairly with flash points to avoid violence.

   In everyday life, the rules are not always clear. There are no referees. We must decide how to deal with flash points and conflict ourselves.

   Remind students that conflict is a part of everyday life, but people don't always fight over conflicts.

2. Distribute **Handout B—Tips for Managing Conflict**. Quickly review the tips. Tell students that these tips give methods for handling conflict on—or off—the playing field.

3. Distribute **Handout C—Conflict in Everyday Life**. Have the students read the handout. Ask the class as a group to answer the following questions:

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- What was Alex's flash point?
- What was Terry's flash point?
- Who was responsible for the conflict? Why?
- What methods from **Handout B—Tips for Managing Conflict** would help Alex and Terry prevent this conflict from turning violent?

4. Complete debrief by reminding students that—on or off the playing field—each person can control what he or she does or says. That way, we can all prevent conflict from growing into violence.

Enrichment Activities

Students can:

1. Expand the sports stories (Handout A) to include the role of the league and the courts in conflict resolution.
2. Write about a recent conflict they had and how they solved the problem.
3. Watch TV or read the newspaper and identify examples of conflicts between individuals or groups. Discuss in class.
4. Develop and present a skit showing how a conflict arises and suggesting possible solutions.

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SPORTS STORIES

The Sports Story below describes a conflict that occurred during a game. This conflict resulted in an incident called a "flash point." The flash point turned the excitement of competition into violence that stopped the game. Work together to:

1. Read your story.
2. Discuss the story among yourselves and answer the questions.
3. Choose a reporter who can describe the sports story in his or her own words and give good reasons for your answers. You can choose more than one reporter.

SPORTS STORY #1

Sandy is a pitcher for a semi-pro baseball team. Casey is a heavy-hitting shortstop from a rival team. This season, Casey has already hit several home runs off Sandy's pitching. As each home run clears the fence, Casey takes off his hat and says "thanks" to Sandy. This makes Sandy's blood boil.

In the second inning of a mid-season game, Casey hits a home run off one of Sandy's pitches. As he runs to first base, he raises his hat and says "thanks" to Sandy. When Casey comes to bat a second time, Sandy pitches a fast ball to Casey that hits him in the elbow. Casey drops his bat and grabs his elbow in pain. Sandy tips his hat to Casey. Infuriated, Casey rushes the mound. He throws two or three punches at Sandy before the other players and the umpire separate the two athletes. Sandy swears he did not intend to hit Casey; it was merely a wild pitch.

Reporter(s):_____ _____

What was this conflict about?

Who was involved in the conflict?

What led up to the conflict?

What was the "flash point" of this conflict?

Who do you think is responsible for the conflict? Why?

How could the players have avoided this conflict?

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3. Choose a reporter who can describe the sports story in his or her own words and give good reasons for your answers. You can choose more than one reporter.

SPORTS STORY #2

Pat plays second base for a local softball team. Tracy stands on first base, having just hit a single for the opposite team. From second base, Pat begins to tease Tracy, calling her names and telling her she's "already out."

Tracy takes off for second base when a teammate hits a grounder. The shortstop scoops up the grounder and tosses it to Pat. Tracy is running hard, head down, ready to slide into second base. Pat catches the lob from the shortstop, tags second base, turns, and throws the batter out at first base to make a double-play. Head down, Tracy keeps running. Tracy collides with Pat and they sprawl in the dirt. Tracy gets up and says, "I may be out, but you sure look dumb lying there in the dirt." Pat and Tracy begin to fight.

Reporter(s):_____ _____

What was this conflict about?

Who was involved in the conflict?

What led up to the conflict?

What was the "flash point" of this conflict?

Who do you think is responsible for the conflict? Why?

How could the players have avoided this conflict?

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3. Choose a reporter who can describe the sports story in his or her own words and give good reasons for your answers. You can choose more than one reporter.

SPORTS STORY #3

Jaime and Corey are ice hockey players who used to be teammates. At the close of last season, Corey signed a new contract with an opposing team for more money. This made Jaime angry.

In their first game against each other, Jaime scores a goal. He yells at his former teammate, "See, we don't need you anymore!" On the next play, Jaime slams Corey into the boards at the side of the rink. Corey responds by tripping Jaime with his stick. When Jaime gets up, he skates towards Corey and hits him from behind. Corey goes sprawling onto the ice. Corey leaps to his feet and jumps Jaime. Players from both sides pile onto the fight that follows.

Reporter(s):_____ _____

What was this conflict about?

Who was involved in the conflict?

What led up to the conflict?

What was the "flash point" of this conflict?

Who do you think is responsible for the conflict? Why?

How could the players have avoided this conflict?

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SPORTS STORY #4

Tish plays guard on a college basketball team. Lee plays forward on the opposite team. As Tish goes in for a layup, Lee fouls her but the referee doesn't call the foul. Tish loudly objects, say "What's the matter with you? Didn't you see what this little sneak did to me?" A minute later, Lee has possession of the ball. She is about to shoot when Tish throws her shoulder into Lee's chest. Lee misses the shot and doubles over in pain. "There!" says Tish. "That's for fouling me." Lee's team calls a time-out.

On the way to the bench, Lee thumps Tish on the back of the head. Tish spins around and slaps Lee. Lee says she was just fooling around, but was upset when Tish threw her shoulder into her chest. Tish says her slap was just a "gut reaction."

Reporter(s):_____ _____

What was this conflict about?

Who was involved in the conflict?

What led up to the conflict?

What was the "flash point" of this conflict?

Who do you think is responsible for the conflict? Why?

How could the players have avoided this conflict?

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1. Read your story.
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3. Choose a reporter who can describe the sports story in his or her own words and give good reasons for your answers. You can choose more than one reporter.

SPORTS STORY #5

Terry plays wide receiver for a high school football team. Dale is a defensive back from the opposite team. Dale has been calling Terry "a loser" and "ladyfingers" after every pass attempt. Terry warns him to "shut up and play the game."

Finally, the quarterback tosses Terry a long, clean pass. Terry leaps high in the air and grasps the ball over his head. Dale hits Terry in mid-air and both players hit the ground hard. Terry gets up and slaps Dale in the back of the helmet, causing Dale to fall to the ground. In falling, Dale dislocates his shoulder.

Reporter(s):_____ _____

What was this conflict about?

Who was involved in the conflict?

What led up to the conflict?

What was the "flash point" of this conflict?

Who do you think is responsible for the conflict? Why?

How could the players have avoided this conflict?

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1. Read your story.
2. Discuss the story among yourselves and answer the questions.
3. Choose a reporter who can describe the sports story in his or her own words and give good reasons for your answers. You can choose more than one reporter.

SPORTS STORY #6

Leslie plays forward for her high school a soccer team. She is a very aggressive player. In the first half of the game, Leslie charged the goalie several times when the ball had already gone out of bounds. She would shout "Look out! Look out! Look out!" at the top of her lungs each time, in an attempt to rattle the goalie. After the third time, the referee gave Leslie a yellow ticket for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Now, late in the game, with the score tied, Leslie gets the ball past the fullback and into the scoring zone. The goalie dives on the ground and grabs the ball. Leslie kicks the goalie in the ribs several times. Leslie claims that she intended to kick the ball, not the goalie.

Reporter(s):_____ _____

What was this conflict about?

Who was involved in the conflict?

What led up to the conflict?

What was the "flash point" of this conflict?

Who do you think is responsible for the conflict? Why?

How could the players have avoided this conflict?

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TIPS FOR MANAGING CONFLICT

You Can Be A STAR

Earlier in this lesson, you discussed how star athletes, referees, and officials work together to resolve violence and keep the game going. When you encounter a conflict or flash point, you can act like a **STAR** athlete. Use these tips to resolve conflicts without violence—on and off the playing field.

S—Stop. Ask yourself "What happened?"

T—Think. What made you angry?

A—Act. Speak up for yourself, cool and peaceful.

R—React. Suggest a solution to the problem.

Here are some basic conflict management skills you can use on or off the playing field.

- **Watch for flash points.** This is where conflict gets serious. Try to control your anger if someone sparks your flash point.
- **Think before you act.** You don't want to "act out" your anger before you stop and think.
- **There are no referees in real life.** Use your own powers of observation and judgment to resolve conflict.

  Communicate. Talk and listen to the other person. Figure out a solution that seems fair to everyone.
- **Establish rules or guidelines.** Make sure everyone understands the agreement.

Most important!

- Take responsibility for your own actions. You can control what you say or do to prevent conflicts from getting worse.

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CONFLICT IN EVERYDAY LIFE

On the playing field, athletes follow rules that make the game exciting and fair. Usually, athletes work with umpires or referees to deal quickly and fairly with flash points and conflict.

In everyday life, the rules are not always clear. There are no referees. We must often decide how to deal with flash points and conflict ourselves.

Read the story below and use tips for managing conflict to deal with conflict in everyday life.

> Terry and Alex go to the same school and have lockers next to each other. Terry's locker is always a mess. Alex's locker is always neat and clean. Almost every day, Terry borrows something from Alex: a book for class, a hair brush, a cassette tape, or a pen or a pencil. Alex is constantly reminding Terry to return the borrowed items, but Terry usually forgets.
>
> One day, Terry asks to borrow Alex's math book. Alex throws the book at Terry and screams, "Get it together, Terry! Bring your own math book to school!" Terry tells his friend not to get sore. He promises to bring his own stuff, but on the next day, Terry asks Alex to borrow some notebook paper. Alex pins Terry against the lockers and shouts, "I've had it with you! Quit bugging me! Don't ask me for anything...ever again!" Terry yells an obscenity at Alex and punches him in the face. Mr. Garcia has to break up the fight and both students end up sitting in the principal's office.

1. What was Alex's flash point?

2. What was Terry's flash point?

3. Who do you think was responsible for making the conflict worse? Why?

4. What methods from **Handout B—Tips for Managing Conflict** would have helped prevent this conflict from getting worse?

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